2013

EQUALITY REPORT CARD
FICHE DE RENDEMENT
SUR L'ÉGALITÉ DES FEMMES

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Conseil consultatif sur la situation de la femme de l'Î. P. É.

Introduction

The Equality Report Card is a process to assess our Province's progress towards women's equality goals. The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women's goal is to work collaboratively with government to help the Province achieve high grades in all priority areas.

The priority actions and other considerations assessed in the 2013 Equality Report Card were established for the current mandate of government, which began in 2011.

Equality Report Cards for the last mandate of government were published in 2008 (pilot), 2009, and 2011, with a different model.

The 2015 Equality Report Card will use 2013 results as a benchmark.

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Scoring Key

Priority Action Areas
Little or No Progress – 0 points
Some Progress – ½ point
Good Progress – 1 point

Other Considerations
Much Worse – 1 point
Somewhat Worse – 2 points
Status Quo – 3 points
Somewhat Better – 4 points
Much Better – 5 points

Bonus – 1 point each

Assessments based on information updated to May 31, 2013.

Overall Assessment 2013

The 2013 Equality Report Card rates the Prince Edward Island Government's progress towards women's equality goals as a **C**.

C

- 20.5 out of a possible 45 points
  for PRIORITY ACTION AREAS set by the PEIACSW
  These priority action areas were selected from recommendations the Advisory Council has made to government in past Report Cards, briefs and submissions, policy guides, and formal meetings. Some recommendations date back many years.
- 33 out of a possible 45 points
  for OTHER CONSIDERATIONS in each category
  These considerations include initiatives that government nominated and Council assessed as good practices to support equality goals.
- 10 out of a possible 10 BONUS points
  These highlight excellent projects and initiatives that are good practices for continuing to improve the status of women and girls and their families in Prince Edward Island.
- THE TOTAL SCORE OF **63.5** OUT OF A POSSIBLE **100** IS AN OVERALL GRADE OF **C**

What does a C mean?

The Advisory Council sets the status quo as a **D**, so **C** represents small but important steps. Some steps towards women's equality are, in fact, substantial. Some highlights include

- ⇗ nation-leading work on gender and diversity analysis
- ⇗ strong support for women's leadership in the public sector
- ⇗ consistent follow-through on investments and initiatives that support early childhood care and education and caregivers of children
- ⇗ ongoing attention to family abuse protocols that are responsive to victims' needs
- ⇗ a "triage" system that improves families' interactions with courts for family law
- ⇗ significant investment in affordable housing
- ⇗ commitment to improving diversity policies and offering specialized programs for diverse groups

These substantial commitments come in the face of difficult economic times for PEI women and families. Poverty and other vulnerabilities expose many of the gaps in programs and services:

- ⇨ lack of targets, timelines, or vision in a Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty, with a lack of sufficient cross-departmental buy-in and action
- ⇨ cuts of 3% in 2012 to non-governmental organizations that provide essential front-line services
- ⇨ significant gaps in women's health supports, especially sexual and reproductive health
- ⇨ lack of gender analysis in economic development planning
- ⇨ a rural development plan that does not enhance women's equality
- ⇨ social services and programs that continue to strip people of their dignity

Upcoming initiatives may respond to some of the current gaps. The Advisory Council on the Status of Women is looking forward to examining the review of the mental health and addictions systems. A catastrophic drug program has been announced that can make a big difference for families. We also look forward to a commitment to updating the statistical profile of Prince Edward Island women, to provide an evidence base for gender analysis. We look forward to working with government towards higher grades in 2015. There is much to build on.

Making Equality a Priority

We expect the provincial government to meet its commitments to analyze the effects of existing and proposed legislation, policy, and budgeting on everyday Island women and men and diverse groups. This means applying gender and diversity analysis in planning, evaluation, decision-making processes, management practices, and organizational culture.

Priority Actions	
Equality Report Card questionnaires completed by all departments of government	**Good Progress**

↗ All government departments and divisions who were asked to complete a questionnaire did so. This task requires a major effort, and the Advisory Council values the time and energy.

Evidence that the Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty reduction strategy applies gender and diversity analysis	**Some Progress**

↗ There is clear evidence that gender and diversity analysis helped inform the Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty. The task force that guided the plan's development included the Interministerial Women's Secretariat to provide a gender lens. Information from *Women in PEI: A Statistical Review 2010* was used in the discussion paper *Preventing and Reducing Poverty in Prince Edward Island: A Strategy for Engagement*. And government recognizes that some actions of the Social Action Plan will benefit women differently from men, including early childhood education access, increased affordable housing, and implementation of therapeutic courts.

↘ The Advisory Council is disappointed that the Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty lacks substance, re-announces past spending, offers no comprehensive vision for the future, and has no targets and timelines for poverty reduction for impoverished women and their families.

Commitment to updating the 2010 statistical profile of women, with target dates	**Some Progress**

↗ The Interministerial Women's Secretariat is committed to updating this document and work has begun, despite cuts to Canada's census that make the work challenging. We look forward to a public commitment and a release date being announced soon. We also look forward to community consultation, including with under-represented women such as First Nations women.

Gender and diversity analysis training piloted and evaluated by senior managers in Community Services and Seniors	**Good Progress**

↗ In December 2011, the Director of the Interministerial Women's Secretariat piloted training to the Senior Leaders Team of Community Services and Seniors. There was positive feedback on the information. The Advisory Council looks forward to evidence other departments have sought the same training for their senior managers and that training is being evaluated.

Concrete example(s) of applied gender and diversity analysis from at least half of government departments	**Good Progress**

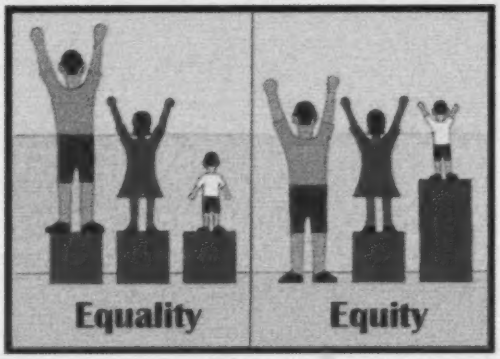
↗ Concrete examples of applied gender and diversity analysis were provided by Community Services and Seniors; Education and Early Childhood Development; Environment Labour and Justice; Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs; Health and Wellness; and Innovation and Advanced Learning. That's 6 out of 10 departments.

↗ Additionally, the Executive Council Office is developing new guidelines to better incorporate gender and diversity analysis in all policy proposals to Cabinet – a very positive development.

↗ A Minister Responsible for the Status of Women who is passionate about her role in supporting the status of women, coupled with impressive and extensive work by offices such as the Interministerial Women's Secretariat and the Public Service Commission Diversity Consultant: these mean that gender and diversity analysis touch all departments of government.

Other Considerations

Highlights



↗ The Interministerial Women's Secretariat developed two nation-leading gender and diversity analysis training guides, one for use within the PEI provincial government, the other for use outside of government. When comparing Provincial/Territorial jurisdictions across Canada, PEI has more gender and diversity analysis resources than many, if not most. The Interministerial Women's Secretariat presented the government training guide to Deputy Ministers and continues to follow up with them on ways to apply it in their departments.

↗ To provide a gender lens, the Interministerial Women's Secretariat is a member of more than 30 committees and working groups, both within and outside of government.

↗ We are proud that Minister Docherty and Prince Edward Island are hosting the 2013 Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women meeting here in PEI. We look forward to the documents that will be released as part of that meeting.

↗ Executive Council Office reports on important work in progress to map and profile policy capacity in the public service, with a gender component in this work.

↘ The Director of the Interministerial Women's Secretariat has also been tasked with the role of Disability and Community Liaison Officer. This role requires its own resources, especially as PEI works to bring itself in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Focus Groups Say...

- Meeting women's needs also helps men and families.
- There are challenges for women who also belong to under-represented groups. It is necessary to look at gender and diversity together.
- Aboriginal women ask the provincial government to advocate with the federal government for greater clarity and equality for women to pass on status to children. In one woman's words, and in her experience, "There is still discrimination against women more than men, for sure."
- The Chairs Circle says widespread, meaningful training of government workers in gender and diversity analysis is a high priority. They are looking for the provincial government to express a vision for Prince Edward Island that includes knowledge of and concern for equality for all Islanders.

Bonus

★ Increased **profile for the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women** in her role as Minister Responsible included statements in the Legislature, hosting of public events, speaking at events, and leadership at federal/provincial/territorial tables.

Impressive, dedicated work by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and the Interministerial Women's Secretariat inspire a general trend towards more and better gender and diversity analysis. Good gender and diversity analysis creates a solid foundation for work towards women's equality goals. Government's success in this category is a signal that all categories and grades could increase on the next Equality Report Card – as long as government's decisions are grounded in the analysis.

Much Worse
Somewhat Worse
Status Quo
Somewhat Better ⬅
Much Better

Women in Decision-Making

We expect the provincial government to actively encourage women's advancement. We also expect the provincial government to break down barriers to women's leadership in elected and appointed decision-making positions and in the public service sector.

Priority Actions	
Increased number of women in Executive Council	Little or No Progress

↘ Only 2 of 10 members of Cabinet are women. This is unchanged since 2007, despite opportunities to improve the numbers. It is especially important to foreground women's leadership now that no party leaders are women. Previously, two parties had women leaders.

⇨ The Speaker and Deputy Speaker are both women. The Speaker's role is important and prominent – however, the Speaker's role also takes her voice out of debate.

⇨ The Advisory Council advises that given women's under-representation in Executive Council, it is important to encourage women's leadership through deputy minister roles. In 2013, only 3/13 deputy ministers were women (prior to one resigning). Government has shown confidence in women leaders by appointing PEI's first woman Auditor General, hiring two women superintendents to lead English and French School Boards, and hiring a woman as CEO of Innovation PEI, a non-traditional management role. More is needed.

Increased number of women appointed to agencies, boards, and commissions	Little or No Progress

⇨ At 39%, the percentage of women applying to Participate PEI is up 9% since 2011.

↘ The percentage of women appointed by Participate PEI is 37%, down 4% from a 2011 peak.

↘ For some appointments (for instance, the Human Rights Commission or Action Committee on Sustainable Land Management), the questionable argument "no *qualified* women applied" causes us concern. One possible solution: make identifying and recruiting "qualified" women applicants and appointees part of Participate PEI's formal mandate and its work.

Increased number of women appointed as chairs or vice-chairs of agencies, boards, and commissions	Some Progress

↗ At least 31% of boards currently have women in leadership roles as Chairs or Vice-Chairs. In 2009 and 2011, the appointment rate of women into Chair and Vice-Chair roles peaked at 27%.

↗ For the first time, the Chairperson of Health PEI is a woman. This is a significant appointment.

Specific, publicly advertised gender and diversity goals for appointments to agencies, boards, and commissions	Some Progress

↗ Health agencies, boards, and commissions formally require gender balance in appointments. Prominent education boards, such as the new single English-language school board, practice gender balance, too. Diversity continues to be taken seriously as a priority for appointments to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and other boards.

⇨ Increased public advertisement of gender and diversity goals is needed.

More balanced proportion of women managers and women workers in departments where women have been under-represented in management and/or where women are in non-traditional roles	Good Progress

⇨ Overall, across all reporting departments, women make up 71% of total workers and 55% of managers across government. Women make up 68% of full-time workers, 80% of part-time workers, and 69% of casual workers for whom there is data available. About 62% of all provincial civil service jobs are in Health PEI. These numbers are all consistent with 2011 numbers.

↗ There is an increasingly strong balance between the proportion of women managers and women workers across government. Ten out of twelve reporting sections have a gap of 10 points or less between the percentage of women in total and women in management.

Other Considerations

Highlights

↗ During the 2012 municipal elections in small municipalities across PEI, the Department of Finance, Energy and Municipal Affairs encouraged Islanders to put their names forward to run in Municipal Elections, with an emphasis on boosting the number of women candidates and voters. They included this message in posters, videos, a website, and other communications. The Coalition for Women in Government reports that in the elections, women represented 30% of all candidates and 31% of those elected. At 26%, the number of women mayors and chairs was down in this election. No women head up municipalities that hold all-day polls.

↗ The Diversity Advisory Committee explains that for the purposes of the Workforce Diversity Policy, the Government of Prince Edward Island has identified the following designated diversity groups: Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, members of visible minority groups, women in leadership, and women and men in non-traditional occupations. The policy includes a framework for accountability and reporting on accommodating "diversity of individuals."

↗ The Public Service Commission offers diversity placement or employment positions to members belonging to these designated diversity groups.

⇨ Women participate in and lead many voluntary sector organizations. Strong public engagement and meaningful public consultations are essential, effective ways to build women's leadership.

Focus Groups Say...

- School boards, band councils, and small municipalities are good places for women to get experience that can prepare them to run for provincial and federal elections.
- There is a need for support for women's qualifications to be assessed fairly and with a gender lens when they are seeking leadership positions.
- The Province can support women's leadership by supporting women's organizations to continue outreach with each other and with women across the province.
- Past Chairs of the Advisory Council continue to call for government to use collaborative decision-making processes that meaningfully engage diverse citizens. A collaborative process begins with communication and information sharing, is followed by inclusive consultations, and concludes with collaborative decision-making. Communications and consultations that take place after decisions are made are not collaborative.

Bonus

☆ Municipal Affairs' focus on **WOMEN AS CANDIDATES AND VOTERS** in 2012 municipal elections was a highlight.

The provincial government shows leadership in supporting women in decision-making through the public service. Good jobs for women in the public sector and dedication to equity and diversity goals in this sector set a good example in a province where low wages and seasonal and insecure work tend to dominate our economy in other sectors. Improvements in women's equality in the public service create benefits for many Island families.

Much Worse
Somewhat Worse
Status Quo
Somewhat Better ⬅
Much Better

Violence Prevention

We expect the provincial government to work towards ending violence against women and children and ending all forms of family violence by providing and supporting programs and services that aim to prevent violence and that support victims when violence occurs.

Priority Actions	
Enhanced core funding for Family Violence Prevention Services, Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, and/or other community-based organizations that support violence prevention or help victims of violence	**Little or No Progress**

↘ In 2012-2013 all NGO funding from Community Services and Seniors was reduced by 3%, from funding we had already in 2011 called too low. This reduction placed funding for FVPS at $617,400 and RSAC at $222,800 for the year. While these organizations will receive increases in 2013–2014 to restore them to levels before the cut, this remains inadequate for them to meet the demand for services in a sustainable way.

Example(s) of enhanced training for intervention in family violence, relationship violence, and violence against women and children for police and justice workers	**Good Progress**

↗ The Victims of Family Violence Act Steering Committee is doing a good job leading the parts of training for police and justice workers that the Province is responsible for. Since spring 2011, actions have included training sessions on police response, police supervisor focus groups to obtain input on training needs, and training/education sessions with justices of the peace. The Family Violence Prevention Coordinator has assisted with many of these training sessions in addition to conducting multiple training sessions on special topics.

New Woman Abuse Protocols developed and applied, or example(s) of existing Woman Abuse Protocols updated, enhanced, or evaluated	**Good Progress**

↗ In February 2013, the Provincial Child Sexual Abuse Advisory Committee released a revised Provincial Child Sexual Abuse Protocol. This is an important achievement.

↗ A variety of woman abuse, spousal abuse, or family abuse protocols are in effect in health, justice, and social service fields. Their continued relevance and use is a big success story.

↗ New policies for Income Support protocols and training for Income Support and Disability Support workers are planned. Initial discussions have taken place towards updating Emergency Room protocols, and information has been developed for hospitals for victims of strangulation.

⇨ Next step needed: evaluations of the protocols and their implementation.

Example(s) of enhanced and specialized programs, information, or supports for victims of family violence, relationship violence, or violence against women and children from specific groups (such as newcomers, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, or youth)	**Good Progress**

↗ Among many initiatives, a few highlights: the Period of PURPLE Crying intervention focuses on reductions in abusive head trauma related to inconsolable crying in infants. The successful Best Start Program for families of new babies who can benefit from additional support was expanded from 24 to 36 months. Free Strangulation Workshops for frontline service providers focused on the needs of victims of violence. A new *Information Guide for Men and Women in an Abusive Relationship* has been popular. And Interministerial Women's Secretariat grants supported projects for preventing violence against women and children from diverse and at-risk groups.

Measures and/or resources to allow adult protection workers to provide more help to adults in compromised circumstances	**Some Progress**

↗ New information-sharing and communications between Adult Protection and doctors, through the Medical Society and a presentation during Grand Rounds, are important steps.

↗ Community education and public awareness-raising on Elder Abuse continue to be strong.

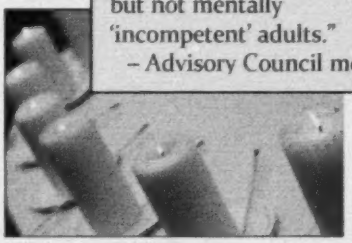
Other Considerations

Highlights

↗ Among violence prevention initiatives, there has been good attention on violence against children and youth. There has also been good focus on men's role in preventing violence.

↗ There are positive effects from support for Aboriginal women's organizations to lead anti-violence work themselves, from federal/provincial/ territorial working groups' efforts, and from programs that specifically address violence against Aboriginal women and children. We are pleased to see language about "respecting and nurturing cultural identity, heritage, community connection, and participation." One gap for Aboriginal women is that some resources, such as the Mi'kmaq Family PRIDE program for children, are not available to off-reserve families. When Aboriginal people flee violence, they tend to leave reserves.

"Preventing elder abuse means enlarging hours or staffing for Adult Protection. We also need *some* sort of programming for vulnerable but not mentally 'incompetent' adults."
– Advisory Council member



⇨ While there has been some focus on newcomers to Canada on the justice side, more prevention-focused initiatives for this group would be welcome. There has been some focus on grants for preventing violence against people with disabilities, but more is needed.

↗ The Family Violence Prevention Coordinator, with the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention, continues to provide essential public information: presentations, town halls, resource guides, and guides for specific groups (such as faith communities). They also collect national and provincial family violence statistics and compile, update, and make them available to advocates, researchers, and the general public.

Focus Groups Say...

- Programs and services for women from diverse groups are helping. An Aboriginal woman said, "I think it is better around violence issues and services on PEI in the past few years." Victim Services and Family Violence Prevention Services are empowering.
- There is a lack of funding for community organizations that help victims of violence or women in crisis. "Organizations are fulfilling government's role to take care of people" – and do not receive enough funding to meet needs, do prevention work and follow up.
- The biggest hurdles for women facing violence continue to be financial security and access to justice – silos still exist between departments that provide services.
- It's important to offer gender analysis of violence and be clear girls and women are not responsible for preventing their own abuse.

Bonus

☆ The **CyberSafe Girl Project** (cybersafegirl.ca) provides bilingual resources to girls and parents for online safety. It was developed by the Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women using good, inclusive processes and incorporating diverse voices.

☆ Initiatives to **prevent human trafficking**, including a workshop for service providers and the soon-to-be-released *Prince Edward Island Human Trafficking Response Guide*.

The provincial government continues to do a good job in its work in preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls, particularly through the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention, the Family Violence Prevention Coordinator, Adult Protection, and Victim Services. Beyond its own role, the Province relies heavily on community agencies to do violence prevention work and provide services for victims. The resources to these community-based services are inadequate.

Much Worse
Somewhat Worse
Status Quo
Somewhat Better ⬅
Much Better

Access to Justice

We expect the provincial government to place high priority on ensuring women and families have access to justice, particularly for family law, and to provide and support programs and services that assist people to receive legal help for legal problems.

Priority Actions	
Implementation of a pilot project for domestic violence court option	Some Progress

↗ The April 2012 Speech from the Throne committed to carefully examine the concept of therapeutic courts in response to federal changes to the Criminal Code. In other jurisdictions, these types of courts include domestic violence courts, drug treatment courts, and mental health courts. We are looking forward to the release of research on possible models for therapeutic courts and their viability in PEI. We wish to see domestic violence court options highlighted.

↗ The Social Action Plan promises to explore the possibility of a Domestic Violence Court as a component of a therapeutic court. We hope and expect it will be an important component.

Steps towards expanded resources for family mediation, counselling, and conflict resolution before families reach court	Some Progress

↗ The Family Court Counsellors' Office mediates custody, access, and child support issues between parties as an alternative to proceeding to court. There is one family mediator. The mediation service is a free, province-wide service that is coordinated by the Family Court Counsellors' Office to assist parents resolve issues of custody, access and child support. Each client is eligible for up to 8 sessions or 12 hours of mediation service. Participation is voluntary. There were 137 client referrals in 2011-12, up from 120 in 2010–11.

Improved access to family law legal aid lawyers	Little or No Progress

↗ The Advisory Council emphasizes that legal aid lawyers do great, important work across PEI. Lawyers who work for legal aid on the certificate system accept low pay, hard work, and a challenging framework to help Islanders access justice. Council also acknowledges and thanks lawyers who accept referrals from CLIA's Lawyer Referral service (essentially as volunteers).

⇨ Combined expenditures for Family and Civil Legal Aid have continued to increase year over year, keeping pace to some extent with increasing costs, but not improving access.

⇨ Access to family law legal aid lawyers has remained the same since 2011. The amount paid to private lawyers acting on behalf of legal aid on certificates continues to be unsustainably low.

⇨ There continues to be essentially no legal aid support for people with moderate incomes or with no children. This is an ongoing hardship for families facing tough break-ups.

Steps towards establishing a provincial child advocate whose mandate includes advocating for children whose families are involved with the family justice system	Little or No Progress

↘ There have been no steps reported towards establishing a child advocate. We encourage that this much-needed service become a priority for government in the future.

Steps towards creating and enacting a "triage" system for family law matters	Good Progress

↗ The "triage" system for family law matters is currently being piloted. This is a big success. In April 2012, the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island launched the pilot project to use pre-motion conferences in family law cases. The aim of the project is to "triage" cases, to identify the issues which need to be determined immediately, to ascertain the parties' positions, to identify any issues which can be settled, to identify cases which may be suitable for mediation, to assist self-represented litigants prepare for the motion, and to provide information on family justice services which may assist the parties in resolving issues in dispute. We look forward to this pilot "triage" system becoming a permanent practice.

Other Considerations

Highlights

- Child and spousal supports are a major issue for families that need this income to survive. In January 2013, amendments to the Maintenance Enforcement Act were proclaimed to authorize charge deterrent fees to delinquent payors. Amendments also authorize service fees to delinquent payors to help offset the cost to government of enforcing child and spousal support orders. In addition, in 2013, the PEI and U.S. governments entered into an agreement so that when one parent lives in PEI and the other lives in the U.S., processes around child support can be streamlined.
- Community and Correctional Services adopted a "Gender and Cultural Sensitivity" policy in 2012 to provide direction to staff on providing service that is gender specific, culturally sensitive, and trauma informed. It is also encouraging to see these lenses being applied to policy.

> "There is no financial aid for lawyers or legal aid for women with moderate incomes. This lack of access can have catastrophic results, where women endure family violence or unhealthy relationships because of a lack of access to justice."
>
> – Focus group participant

- Good data sets are crucial to doing gender and diversity analysis and making good policy decisions. We anticipate positive results from PEI's contributions of time, effort, and resources to Statistics Canada's *Measuring Violence against Women: Statistical Trends* (2013).

Focus Groups Say...

- Access to lawyers was something focus groups said they needed not only for dealing with family law and relationship breakups, but also for navigating the social assistance system, getting advice on a range of issues, and addressing criminal fraud.
- Applying for justice programs and services, accessing legal aid, and consistent communication about maintenance enforcement are all still challenges.
- Getting though a relationship break-up and negotiating child support and custody are still very challenging when there is fear. "They told me I had the responsibility of getting the child support from my ex, and that as an incentive they were cutting off my [social assistance] amount until I got it from him. I was scared of him."
- Alternatives to court are not safe for everyone. "They wouldn't even help me unless we tried mediation. There was a history of abuse and alcohol, so mediation wasn't an option. He was the one unwilling to go to mediation, so why was I being punished?"

Bonus

- The new provincial **Child Sexual Abuse Protocol** is a major accomplishment, and the process was also important: PEI is the only jurisdiction where First Nations groups were actively involved in creating and endorsing a protocol.
- The **Girl's Work Project** provided training for all Youth Justice Services staff, focusing on gender-specific strategies and incorporating a strengths-based approach, trauma responsiveness, and cultural competence.

Access to justice continues to be an area where excellent work is being done in the face of strong demand. The system as it currently exists will never be able to keep pace with that demand. That is why the work to provide alternative supports – where they are safe and appropriate – is a high priority for the Advisory Council. At the same time, we must advocate for adequate access to the justice system that is in place at present.

Much Worse
Somewhat Worse
Status Quo
Somewhat Better ⬅
Much Better

Women's Health

We expect the provincial government to sustain a strong system for acute care. We also expect the provincial government to relieve future burdens on the acute care system by continuing work in wellness and health promotion. To improve wellness, we expect government to recognize whole-body, holistic health, and to address social determinants of health, such as income, gender, language, and culture.

Priority Actions	
Improved support for seniors' prescription drug costs	Some Progress

↗ In 2012 there was a move from 60-day supplies to 90-day supplies for clients of the Social Assistance, Children in Care, and Family Health Benefit drug programs, and a large number of drugs were moved to be eligible for 90-day supplies for the same groups and also for seniors. This results in lower prescription drug costs.

↗ We are looking forward to further information about the catastrophic drug program announced for fall 2013 and are hopeful about its benefits for Islanders.

A review of funding and services in mental health, especially Community Mental Health	Some Progress

↗ Health and Wellness has completed a comprehensive review of mental health and addictions services and supports. Government has outlined a number of measures to ensure that gender dimensions of mental health and addictions issues are taken into consideration. The Advisory Council awaits the results of this important review with anticipation and will respond.

⇨ Health PEI clarifies that the Community Mental Health Audit was not a review of funding and services but rather a review of access to Community Mental Health Services. Recommendations related to this review focus on improving quality through intake policies and access standards, enhanced group programming, and planning for specific populations.

Increased funding for addiction services, such as more addiction rehabilitation services, extended care facilities, and recovery homes in more communities across PEI, in physically accessible spaces	Little or No Progress

⇨ Health PEI has received funding from Health Canada for addictions system improvement for the past 2 1/2 years and has worked, for example, to improve referral, intake, and programming in Inpatient Withdrawal Management and to extend the methadone program to Summerside.

⇨ A growing epidemic in use of prescription narcotics leads community groups to call for urgent action, including steps that ensure adequate time for medical detox from substances other than alcohol, treatment services available when people are ready for treatment, and a plan for longer-term residential care, especially for youth. Government is at beginning steps with a strategy – and very much requires community input.

Continued steps towards and support for the Sexual Abuse Nurse Examiner (SANE) program	Some Progress

↗ Through contacts made in a F/P/T working group, New Brunswick organized and provided free training, leading to PEI's first fully trained Sexual Abuse Nurse Examiner. A working group continues to look at ways to create a sustainable SANE program that works for PEI.

Steps towards greater reproductive justice on Prince Edward Island	Little or No Progress

↘ Health professions legislation planned for the spring 2013 legislative sitting and that could allow midwifes to apply for regulation in PEI has been delayed. Midwives express reservations about the feasiblity of proposed legislation for expanding midwifery services.

↘ Premier Ghiz says that the "status quo" of no local access to abortion services will hold. This policy severely limits choices for low-income, young, and vulnerable women. It contravenes the Canada Health Act and fails to uphold women's rights that were confirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada 25 years ago. This situation is unjust, unacceptable, and must change.

Other Considerations

Highlights

⇨ Acute care continues to be the very expensive focus of health planning. The Advisory Council is looking for government to recognize the benefits of addressing social factors that affect health, such as income, gender, and culture. Allowing Islanders to live in poverty is costly in many ways, and yet the Social Action Plan does not propose sufficient action to move people out of poverty.

⇨ The review of mental health and addictions services will be an important document to PEI. It was pleasing that consultations included groups that focus on violence and trauma. Unless the review recommends strong client-centred, collaborative approaches to helping people with problems related to mental health or addictions or both, we are concerned that people with complex needs will continue to fall through the cracks.

⇨ As every aspect of health care comes under scrutiny and as hospitals, clinics, and beds are realigned, there is urgent need for grassroots consultation about what communities need, from long-term rehabilitation for drug-addicted youth, to sexual and reproductive health clinics.

> "Costs for travel off-Island and accommodations when healthcare services are not available here are a major challenge for families."
> "Health – and illness – should not have to be put on hold due to lack of financial resources."
> – Focus group participants

Focus Groups Say...

- Access to family doctors continues to be important. Access to walk-in clinics or nurse practitioners is uneven across PEI. People are shunted to ERs when family doctors are not available.
- Social assistance recipients who used to receive help with medications for up to a year after being on assistance say they are now cut off when their assistance ends.
- Funding for transportation to access basic health care is a challenge. Cost of medication is a huge challenge. Staying healthy is expensive: "Unhealthy food is so much cheaper."
- The soon-to-be-implemented *811 telehealth number for non-emergency medical questions is very much looked forward to.
- Youth addictions are a great concern: "Adolescent girls need a rehab centre for follow-up care after detox," and adolescents need "resource people they can talk to" in schools – youth workers and counsellors or police – and in the wider community.

Bonus

Through Health PEI and partners, PEI has been a pilot site for a Canadian Association for Mental Health National Youth Screening Project to identify ways government departments and community-based organizations can **COLLABORATE TO HELP YOUTH AT RISK OF DEVELOPING MENTAL HEALTH/ADDICTIONS** problems.

With health care budgets making up such a huge proportion of the provincial budget and such intense discussion of the future of health care services on Prince Edward Island, women's health concerns continue to lack champions. Our Council is looking forward to the report from the Mental Health and Addictions Review and will give it close analysis. Meanwhile, the Council is appalled that PEI continues to create major hurdles for women to address sexual and reproductive health challenges.

Much Worse
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Much Better

Supports for Caregivers

We expect the provincial government to value the often unpaid and underpaid work of caregivers, often women, who care for children or adults, including seniors. To allow caregivers full participation in the life of Island society, government must enact policies that increase supports, not burdens, for caregiving.

Priority Actions	
Increased funding for home care for seniors and/or respite care programs for their caregivers	Some Progress

↗ The Enhanced Home Care for Frail Seniors (EHCFS) Program provides additional hours of service to frail seniors to allow them to return home from hospital sooner and remain safely at home longer. Expansion of the Program is planned, pending the identification of resources.

↗ Health PEI says planning is underway for expansion of the Seniors Mental Health Resource Team to provide assessment, treatment, and caregiver support (individual and group) in home, long-term care, and community care. We urge that plans be completed soon.

⇨ On the whole, increases are not keeping pace with needs. People are assessed according to individual need, but resources are stretched too thin. Government needs to examine the cost savings to hospitals and acute care systems when seniors receive care at home – and redistribute some of these savings back into supports for seniors and caregivers. Especially needed is more respite support for exhausted caregivers and more practical, hands-on support for seniors.

Increased access for childcare for Island families, especially for infants	Good Progress

↗ As part of the Preschool Excellence Initiative, infant spaces increased by 51% across the province in the 2011-2012 fiscal year, and increased again by 3.3% in the 2012-2013 fiscal year. Overall childcare spaces increased in 2012-2013 after a decrease the previous year. Currently in some regions there are more spaces than are being filled, while waiting lists remain in others.

⇨ Infant spaces remain an area where demand for spaces continues to be higher. Government needs to work towards more regulated spaces for infants, possibly by expanding the idea of Infant Homes, as initially explored in the Preschool Excellence Initiative launch.

Continued investment in early childhood care and education that increases quality, accessibility, affordability, and focuses on child development	Good Progress

↗ The number of Early Years Centres increased to 46 in 2011-2012 (up from 41 in 2010-2011).

↗ The Early Learning Framework was piloted in all Early Years Centres in 2011-2012 and was implemented in 2012-2013. The Early Learning Framework is a curriculum framework that focuses on four main learning goals – wellbeing, exploration and discovery, expression and communication, and social and personal responsibility – and guided by three learning principles – relationships, environment, and experiences.

Improved childcare subsidies for lower-income families	Some Progress

↗ Child Care Subsidy Program rates were increased by $1 per day to be equal to rates charged by Early Years Centres. This represents an investment of approximately $170,000 per year. Approximately 1,000 families qualified for Child Care Subsidies during the reporting period.

Steps towards implementing the "Triple P" positive parenting program for PEI	Some Progress

↗ Executive Council has heard and examined a proposal for implementing the Triple P positive parenting program. It received a strong reception, and the Advisory Council is hopeful the program will proceed to implementation.

↗ Health and Wellness and Health PEI funded and assisted in developing a pilot to implement a Triple P group at Catholic Family Services. This pilot links people referred to Community Mental Health with the right resources.

Other Considerations

Highlights

"What has helped me a lot as a single mother is the daycare subsidy... Without the subsidy, I wouldn't have been able to work, for sure."
– Focus group participant

⇗ The Advisory Council appreciates the importance of continued investment in the education of Early Years Centre staff through training and professional development offerings and continues to praise the government's commitment to providing educational opportunities to kindergarten teachers transitioning into the public school system.

⇗ Caregiving for seniors is getting increased attention, with a focus on end-of-life care. It is heartening that initiatives such as the Palliative Home Care Drug Program have led to success in increasing time at home by 22% for patients with an end-stage illness. Canadian-recognized LEAP (Learning Essentials Approaches to Palliative and End of Life Care) training was first given to the Palliative Care physicians and care coordinators across PEI in 2008 and continues to be a cornerstone.

⇗ While the Advisory Council expressed concerns about the process related to the Mental Health and Addictions Survey, we are encouraged that it included the experience of caregivers.

⇨ Supports are needed across the lifespan for caregivers to people with special needs and disabilities. Special needs assistants in early childhood education do not see their skills reflected in the pay grid. Caregivers to adults with disabilities are desperate for respite. Overburdened caregivers can result tragically in unwarranted institutionalization.

Focus Groups Say...

- Childcare options still do not meet the needs of parents in the workforce. There is need for support for flexible, after-hours, well-subsidized childcare in more communities.
- In the words of one participant, "If you are laid off work, there is not enough time to get another job before the daycare subsidy is cut off."
- More spaces are needed in programs such as Aboriginal Headstart.
- Federally funded Family Resource Centres continue to be a very important support for parents and families. They are "great in terms of support and socializing."
- Seniors and caregivers need doctors to be more conscious of their needs. More time, more plain language, and more explanatory notes between appointments would help.
- Participants in a consultation on health equity put a high priority on broad-based parenting supports as the most important factor in PEI achieving greater health equity.

Bonus

★ The **Period of PURPLE Crying Program** is a provincial program to educate parents and caregivers about normal infant crying and the dangers of shaking an infant, to prevent infant abusive head trauma. Supporting caregivers also prevents violence!

Early childhood care and education continues to be a significant focus of investment, and those investments continue to help support women and their families. Evidence is clear: we will reap long-term rewards by supporting children in their early years and their families. Given the pressures on the hospital systems on Prince Edward Island and the explosion of the population of seniors, enhanced home care options need urgent attention.

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Much Better

Adult Education and Training

We expect the provincial government to continue to support women's equitable access to education and training, particularly in areas where women have been under-represented and in areas that are the focus of economic development.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	
Example(s) of funding for programs that increase women's participation in trades and technology	**Some Progress**

⇗ The Advisory Council supports innovative programming to enhance women's participation in trades and technology, such as Women's Network's Trade HERizons program, supporting awareness and engagement for women into non-traditional trade careers. We are heartened to learn that in the past three years, the number of women registering as apprentices has tripled to 4.5%. We're looking for Trade HERizons or similar programs to receive sustained support.

Example(s) of improved supports for women and under-represented groups to develop work skills in priority economic development fields (aerospace, IT, biotech) and/or traditional industries (farming, fishing, tourism)	**Little or No Progress**

⇨ The Advisory Council continues to be deeply concerned about economic development priorities that have had little gender analysis and that appear to leave our traditional industries behind, and rural PEI with them. Economic development with a gender lens would mean more support for transitions from poverty to livelihood and systemic – not spotty – supports for transit options, gender-sensitive health and safety supports, and childcare (including at odd hours for shift workers).

Increased investment in programs and services that improve literacy and numeracy for adults	**Little or No Progress**

⇨ The Province continues to provide funding for GED/upgrading programs that are much-lauded by Council. We applaud efforts to make programs available in French and in locations that are convenient for First Nations and other groups. However, citizens on social assistance still face barriers to accessing GED programs. On a positive note, an Employment Support Services program initiated in 2012 now works with social assistance recipients to identify their readiness for entry to the work force and to develop individual case plans to move them closer to their goals.

⇨ Outside GED programs, funding and programming are seriously lacking for adult literacy and essential skills in a province with alarmingly low literacy. There are few options for adult Islanders who wish to learn to read or improve essential skills. Newcomers with language needs also require more support and more programming so they can contribute fully to their new home and society.

Example(s) of Skills PEI programs or services that focus on developing skills for long-term, year-round employment	**Some Progress**

⇗ Training PEI, Employ PEI, Self Employ PEI, Graduate Mentorship, Work Experience PEI, and individual projects supported under the Labour Market Agreement (such as Trade HERizons, Women's Project, and Adventure Group programming) provide positive, if not new, programs. Negotiating new labour market agreements among federal and provincial government and employers could create new barriers or new opportunities – negotiations will require a gender lens.

⇗ Interministerial Women's Secretariat and Skills PEI supported East Prince Women's Information Centre for an employability project for vulnerable women, aged 30 to 54, to achieve self-sufficiency.

Steps towards Island-wide public transit to increase access to education and training, employment, and services	**Some Progress**

⇨ The Province provides funding for the County Line Express between Charlottetown and Summerside. This increases public transit options in some regions but still is far from Island-wide.

⇨ The Province continues to fund Transportation West and Pat and the Elephant for transportation to persons with disabilities and to Trius Tours for transportation services to Tremploy clients. These specialized, segregated services do not equal an accessible, affordable public transit system.

Other Considerations

Highlights

↗ Women continue to be very well represented in university programs, and the Province's scholarship and bursary programs for post-secondary education are an important contribution to a woman's ability to pursue higher education. This is an area that would benefit from more intensive ongoing gender and diversity analysis.

↗ A new provincial bursary program directed toward lower-income students and mature students with dependants is a positive step.

⇨ The future of post-secondary education in PEI is important to women. There is great need to ensure women's full and active inclusion in priority areas of economic development. For example, cuts at UPEI are likely to affect women more than men. The Province should ensure there is more of a gender lens applied when it provides money to support post-secondary institutions.

↘ Rural development is a strong priority for the Advisory Council, and Council members are concerned about the future of rural PEI, as people and opportunities drain away. The Rural Action Plan does not address or provide support for women's equality goals at all.

> "You need a high level of training to enter the labour market for almost every job now – food and beverage server, road worker, everything...
> Lots of the jobs that are available need training I don't have."
> – Focus group participant

↘ Council is deeply concerned about cutbacks to support for adult literacy, numeracy, and essential skills at the federal and provincial levels, particularly in a province where low literacy is a major issue and so many adults have difficulty reading at a functional level.

Focus Groups Say...

- Career counselling is a good help and support, and many focus group participants were glad to have access to programs supported by Skills PEI.
- When you have caregiving responsibilities, there is not enough support to get training and get work, and childcare subsidies do not cover enough time to find work. "How am I supposed to job hunt with a four-year-old?" one focus group member asked.
- The assistance system creates barriers to transitions into work. "You can't even work in the grocery store without your GED, but you can't go to GED while on assistance," one focus group member said. Another said, "You need a bridge to help you get ahead."
- On HST and economic development priorities, one heartfelt response from a focus group participant was, "They are trying to drive out the poor." In another focus group, there was concern about whether rebates will offset true costs of HST to low-income households.
- "For those without means, going to university, especially in French, means they must leave their families, take an apartment, travel, and in addition pay tuition." Too many educated Islanders have too little incentive to return to the Island when their studies are complete.

Investments in post-secondary students and institutions, especially universities, benefit women and are important. Education and training that improves essential skills for good employment is also essential to women and their families. In order to benefit from these investments, women need wrap-around public services such as transit and childcare that make education and training more available to everyone.

Much Worse
Somewhat Worse
Status Quo
Somewhat Better
Much Better

Diversity and Inclusion

We expect the provincial government to actively engage our increasingly diverse population and to take special measures to include diverse and vulnerable groups in the social, cultural, economic, and democratic life of the Province.

Priority Actions	
A strong focus on social inclusion and democratic participation in the Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty with the purpose of meeting the needs of identified vulnerable groups	Little or No Progress

↘ As the Province's discussion paper *Preventing and Reducing Poverty* says, "Social inclusion is a central goal of poverty reduction strategies in most jurisdictions." The paper talks specifically about disability supports, settlement services for newcomers, and Aboriginal partnerships. The May 2012 Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty does not commit to new work on these. Some work has followed the report (investments in Disability Support), and there is now a promise that indicators and measures are being developed. To date, there is no demonstrated understanding of how to reduce poverty, increase social inclusion, and support citizens to live in dignity.

⇨ Government hopes a new goal added to the social action plan, to "provide fair and equitable opportunities for Islanders to participate in and contribute to the cultural, economic and social environment of PEI," will contribute to actions that increase social inclusion.

Evidence of increased consultation with minority and under-represented populations to ensure policies / legislation are informed by all Islanders	Some Progress

↗ All reporting departments and offices described some increased consultation with one or more under-represented groups. Two positive steps include approval of a Diversity Policy by Executive Council and steady implementation of the 2010 Revised Workforce Diversity Policy.

↘ Many community organizations that work with diverse groups express frustration that government has little willingness to engage in inclusive dialogues or collaborative decision-making.

Steps towards establishing a provincial Ombudsperson as an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly	Little or No Progress

↘ There are no reports that indicate an Ombudsperson is being looked at. The need for an Ombudsperson comes up again and again in community-based consultations. A recent example: the April workshop "InFocus: Building a More Inclusive Community for People with Disabilities."

Increased funding for employment and economic development programs that enhance workforce attachment for people with disabilities	Some Progress

↘ People with disabilities report increased challenges in making full use of employment services. Elimination of 100% wage subsidies, the move from apprenticeship to mentorship supports, and the focus on business employers (at the expense of community organizations) are major blows.

↗ Government hopes the creation of a new cross-governmental Disability Policy Forum will influence policies across government and assess the impact of government programs and services.

⇨ Government continues to be committed to work with the Disability Action Council (DAC). It is time for renewed energy and motivation for DAC and funding for initiatives that come out of it.

Changes to legislation that limit the use of substitute decision-making and allow for supported decision-making	Some Progress

⇨ While a working group has been formed and includes government and community representatives, it has only met once and lacks terms of reference. Research and a cross-jurisdictional scan have been completed as they work towards legislation.

⇨ We have been eager for action that leads to supported decision-making, which affirms life, affirms trust in friends, and affirms the right to control one's destiny. We agree that legislation must be done with respect, care, and responsible funding supports to make the legislation effective and ensure safety; however, it is past time to work with community organizations to get it done.

Other Considerations

Highlights

↗ The PEI Public Service Commission leads ongoing work on a government-wide training strategy on Diversity and Cultural Understanding. Approximately 1,000 employees have attended training. Other initiatives from the Public Service Commission include a Diversity Talent Pool, the Diversity Employment Program, and a 2012 Workforce Diversity Survey. The public service plays a vital role in the culture and economy of Prince Edward Island, and it is essential that they develop good models such as this and set a positive example.

⇨ When it comes to including and supporting diverse groups and individuals in the wider PEI community, initiatives tend to be small but are widespread. They support diversity more than inclusion. They include initiatives to improve accessibility for people with different abilities, more concerted effort to respect the Duty to Consult Aboriginal Islanders, projects that promote inclusion of Black Islanders and visible minorities, efforts to help newcomers to Canada access services, publications or services in multiple languages, and particular recognitions for seniors', women's, or other under-represented groups' contributions to community. Real inclusion means *seeking and welcoming* diversity at the highest levels of decision-making for a significant, representative number of "diverse" Islanders. And it means including low-income Islanders.

↗ The Mi'kmaq-Canada-PEI Partnership Agreement, signed in 2007 and Canada's most comprehensive collaborative agreement between a province and its First Nations, continues to provide a framework for consultation and inclusion on many areas included in the Report Card. Aboriginal groups remind: women are often under-represented as decision-makers.

↗ The new, long-awaited French Language Services Act builds on existing legislation and lays a foundation for future expansion towards delivering services in response to community needs.

Focus Groups Say...

- "You really need an advocate" for many systems when you face barriers of income, language, culture, or unfamiliarity with systems. "If someone speaks up for you, you can get what you need."
- People with mobility challenges limit their activities outside their usual surroundings because of lack of accessibility. Mandatory and enforced regulations for accessible buildings are needed, and not just for public buildings.
- For youth, the Quebec model of "maisons des jeunes" (youth centres) is a good one for preventing addictions and crime and supporting youth to be engaged in the community.

Bonus

☆ Education and Early Childhood Development highlights **CURRICULUM OUTCOMES THAT PROMOTE EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION** and reflect the experiences, interests, achievements, and perspectives of students of all genders and diverse backgrounds.

Every department of government was able to name ways in which diversity and inclusion are important to completing their work successfully, with positive results for Islanders. It is more challenging to see evidence that departments are recognizing the overlap and intersection of *gender* and diversity. Given the way that poverty excludes and disenfranchises so many Islanders, the lack of a Social Action Plan with meaningful targets and timelines, and the lack of leadership on poverty reduction from the highest level of government, are barriers to meaningful social inclusion.

Much Worse
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Status Quo
Somewhat Better
Much Better

Women's Economic Status

We expect the provincial government to set a high priority on improving the health, dignity, and well-being of Islanders who live with less than a livable income. Livable income means that people are able to meet their basic needs in good health and dignity and can also deal with emergencies. We urge government to consult and collaborate with low-income Islanders and community-based organizations as they act on a Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty.

Priority Actions	
Increased social assistance rates that bring individuals and families up to the poverty line	Little or No Progress

⇨ The Community Services & Seniors budget increased by $4.4 million this spring, including a commitment to increase social assistance rates – but not enough to keep pace with rent hikes and other cost increases. Min. Valerie Docherty promises to move in the right direction: "We're not going to get there this year. Our increases are not that significant at all, but we're starting." In the meantime, social assistance recipients remain unable to meet their basic needs in dignity.

⇨ Increasing the cap on earnings for social assistance recipients could be a first, no-cost step.

Increased funding for and construction of affordable, accessible, appropriate housing units	Some Progress

↗ All levels of government, non-profit organizations, and the private sector have worked together to build 184 new units in PEI since 2011. What's more, the Social Action Plan announced 60 new rent supplements over three fiscal years: 16 designated for families and 4 for persons with mental health issues. There are commitments to enhance home repair programs.

⇨ The housing situation continues to be dire, especially for many renters. Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission has approved more than 10% in increases since 2010. And since the closure of Grandmother's House, there is no shelter for homeless women in Charlottetown.

↘ One indicator of increased need: PEI Housing Corporation reports 2010–2011 wait lists were 483 for seniors' housing (up from 339 in 2007–2008) and 406 for family housing (up from 382 in 2007–2008). There is priority placement for victims of violence, but there is no longer a dedicated unit for families escaping violent situations.

Example(s) of policies that support food security, especially among vulnerable groups	Little or No Progress

⇨ The Social Action Plan commits to explore establishing a standard for regular annual food rate increases for people on Social Assistance. This food costing analysis is *urgently* needed.

⇨ Food security for children is beginning to be addressed through Family Resource Centres and school-based breakfast programs active in 51 of 63 Island schools. These programs are inclusive and non-stigmatizing; on the other hand, they are a charity-based, volunteer-reliant model.

Appropriate consultation and collaboration with individuals and community organizations as part of a Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty with targets and timelines	Little or No Progress

⇨ The 2011 Equality Report Card praised government for coordinating excellent meetings with 16 stakeholder groups in spring 2011. Two additional meetings followed the 2011 Report Card.

⇨ What followed was the release of the information-rich discussion paper *Preventing and Reducing Poverty* and a (problematic) process for online responses to it. The Advisory Council sees little evidence in the Social Action Plan that consultations were meaningful. We hope that follow-up requests for first-person accounts of experiencing poverty inspire action.

Improvements to employment standards (including minimum wage) for non-unionized workers	Some Progress

↗ In April 2012, the minimum wage rate increased from $9.60/hour to $10/hour.

↘ In November 2012, the annual process to review the minimum wage recommended no change this year, though the wage remains below the poverty line and the cost of living is increasing.

Other Considerations

Highlights

"Sometimes, I just skip meals so that there is enough for the kids to eat. It is really challenging to buy healthy food."
"I eat less food than I want."
– Focus group participants

↗ The budget for the Disability Support Program was increased by over $800,000 for 2011-12, $283,000 in 2012–13 and $1.4 million in 2013–14. Funds will extend access to this important program to more people who require support though it will not increase funds to those already receiving support.

↗ Changes to federal EI pose a critical challenge to PEI families and will affect the social assistance system. An EI Working Group has done important impact analysis of Employment Insurance changes, with special attention to gender and to impacts on low-income Islanders who receive the Family Supplement. A Standing Committee went to PEI communities to hear people's experiences and concerns.

↗ Through Extended Services, there are new and better supports for children in the permanent care of the Director of Child and Family Services as they transition into adulthood. This is a good step for a group that often falls between the cracks.

⇨ Housing, services, and supports for Temporary Foreign Workers are new challenges. There are not yet provincial policies in place to protect Temporary Foreign Workers or address systemic barriers to the workplace rights and complaints processes that they are theoretically entitled to.

⇨ We urge government to build on a grassroots campaign that is in the works to support a *basic income guarantee* as a realistic and achievable option to eliminate poverty in PEI.

Focus Groups Say...

- Changes in minimum wage are great – except "our raises now go up slower."
- "The amount we receive from social services definitely feels like less. It buys less." Costs are going up "like crazy." Food banks do not meet the need.
- "Rent is unbelievable," and it is "really hard to find a *decent* place," especially with kids, who are not welcome in some units. One participant said, "Someone has to challenge those landlords." No one should have to live in unsafe, unhealthy housing.
- Focus group members experienced differences in support from community to community and worker to worker. It's "not a real provincial system. Why is [what you can ask for and access] different from town to town and city to city?"
- "It is a support system, right? You should be able to go in there and feel comfortable and not discriminated against and looked down upon." People do not feel treated with dignity when they ask for help: "She got really into my personal business. It was an unnerving experience, she made me feel so small. I am not going there alone anymore."
- Participants in a health equity consultation put poverty elimination (including food costing) at the top of the list of what is needed to achieve greater health equity.

Bonus

Government is taking **ACTION ON AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING**. However, continuing planning and investment are needed to meet increasingly desperate needs.

There have been small actions to assist low-income Islanders, and the Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty has highlighted what the government has done in the past. Even in the face of worsening economic pressures, there is little vision for the future to address and eliminate poverty in Prince Edward Island. Government does not appear to agree with us that we have a collective responsibility, expressed through our government, to put top priority on our most vulnerable citizens to support them to live in dignity.

Much Worse
Somewhat Worse
Status Quo
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Process Notes

A Fair and Collaborative Process

- PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women decided on priority action areas and a streamlined model for the 2013 Equality Report Card and in July 2012 distributed the proposed model, timeline, and assessment criteria to all departments of government.
- Each department of government completed a questionnaire about actions their department had taken to support women's equality and diversity.
- All members of the Advisory Council reviewed information from departments and from Council research and recorded their individual assessments through a survey.
- Advisory Council staff conducted focus groups and consultations with women who are not well-represented in community organizations that the Council usually consults about the Equality Report Card.
- Using the survey results and focus group comments, the Advisory Council members agreed on draft assessments in each priority area, in a collaborative and consensus-based workshop. Members gave direction about the analysis to support assessments.
- PEI Status of Women staff shared draft grades and analysis with government representatives for corrections, updates, and other input.
- Advisory Council members and staff shared draft grades and analysis with community members and community organizations for corrections, updates, and other input.
- Members of the Advisory Council made any changes they felt were necessary to the grades and analysis, based on feedback and new information from government and community.
- PEI Status of Women staff finalized and released the Equality Report Card.

About the Focus Groups

- One focus group took place in French and included mostly Acadian women.
- A second focus group took place in the Aboriginal community and included mostly young parents.
- The Chairs Circle, an annual consultation with past and current Chairpersons of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, served as an additional focus group for the Equality Report Card.

- Taken as a whole, the focus groups included more than 25 women and 2 men ranging in age from youth to seniors and included an even split between people living in urban and rural communities. During the focus groups, one or more participants identified themselves as having personal and/or familial experiences of violence, abuse, separation or divorce, disability, mental illness, addictions, other kinds of poor health, poverty, unemployment, unsafe housing, food insecurity, caregiving responsibilities, involvement in the justice system, and/or discrimination based on gender. Focus group participants were not asked to identify their exact age, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other markers of diversity.
- Participants in a workshop on health equity who took part in a presentation about the Equality Report Card were invited to share their priorities related to achieving health equity. There were seven short written responses submitted during this consultation.

Thanks and Acknowledgments

The members and staff of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women would like to thank the many groups in the community and in government that contributed information for this report. We thank those who received and reviewed whole or partial drafts and provided corrections, comments, insights, and analysis as we prepared this Equality Report Card. We particularly acknowledge the time that people and groups contributed on an unpaid volunteer basis.

Within government and in politics:

- Departmental representatives in all departments of government and in the government offices of Executive Council, the Interministerial Women's Secretariat, and the Public Service Commission.
- The Premier, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, and all Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Government.
- Opposition party leaders, women's critics, and/or women's committees.

Within voluntary-sector and community-based organizations:

Representatives from community organizations were asked to review parts of the draft Equality Report Card. Most of these groups provided feedback:

Aboriginal Women's Association
Abortion Rights Network
Actions Femmes
ALERT
Association for Newcomers to Canada
Chief Mary Bernard Memorial Women's Shelter
Citizen Advocacy
Coalition for Women in Government
Community Legal Information Association
Cooper Institute
Council of People with Disabilities
Canadian Union of Public Employees
Early Childhood Development Association
East Prince Women's Information Centre
Family Violence Prevention Services
Justice Options for Women
Literacy Alliance
Mi'kmaq Family Resource Centre
People First
Public Transit Coalition
Rape and Sexual Assault Centre
Senior Citizens' Federation
Union of Public Sector Employees
Women's Network PEI
Working Group for a Livable Income

Thanks...

- Individual women in the community who were consulted by Advisory Council members for their comments and perspectives.
- Women who have called the Advisory Council on the Status of Women office to share their experiences and to help us identify the gaps in policy, services, and legislation that affect their lives.
- Participants in the focus groups whose analysis complemented that of the Advisory Council and kept the Equality Report Card grounded.

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